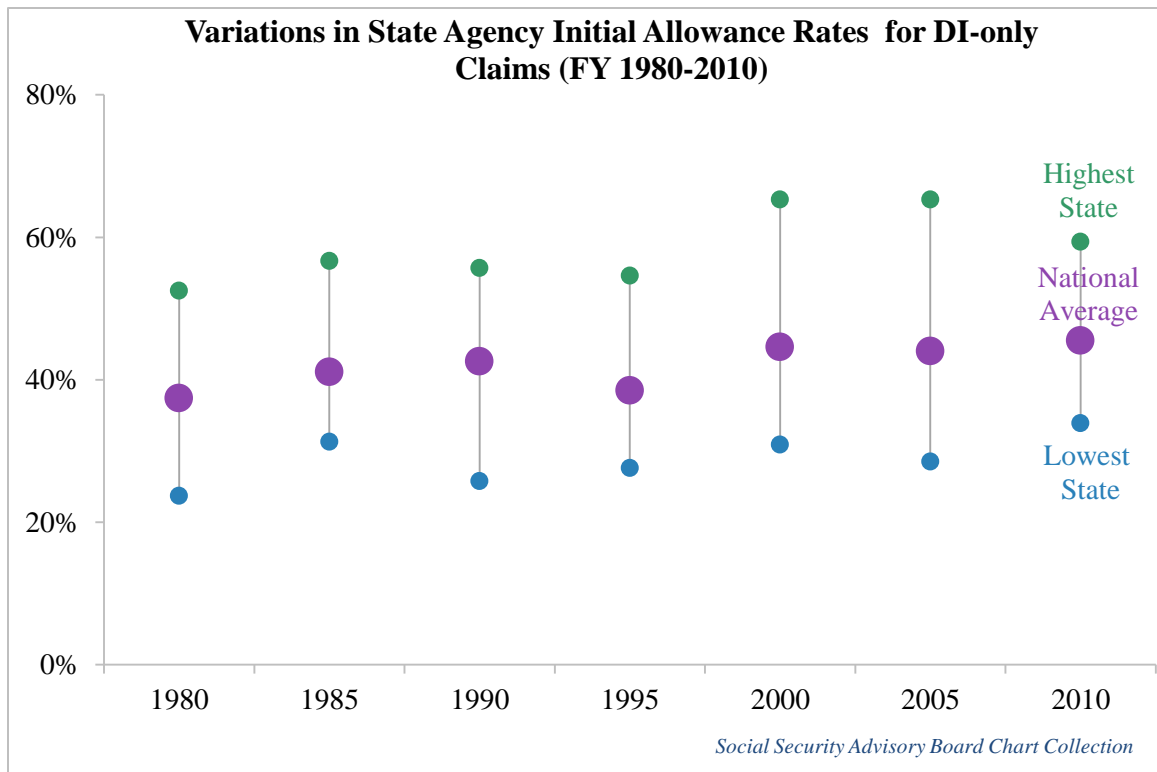


Chapter 7: Variation in State Agency Decision-Making

Social Security Advisory Board



Chart 1a: Variation in DDS Initial Allowance Rates: DI-only Claims

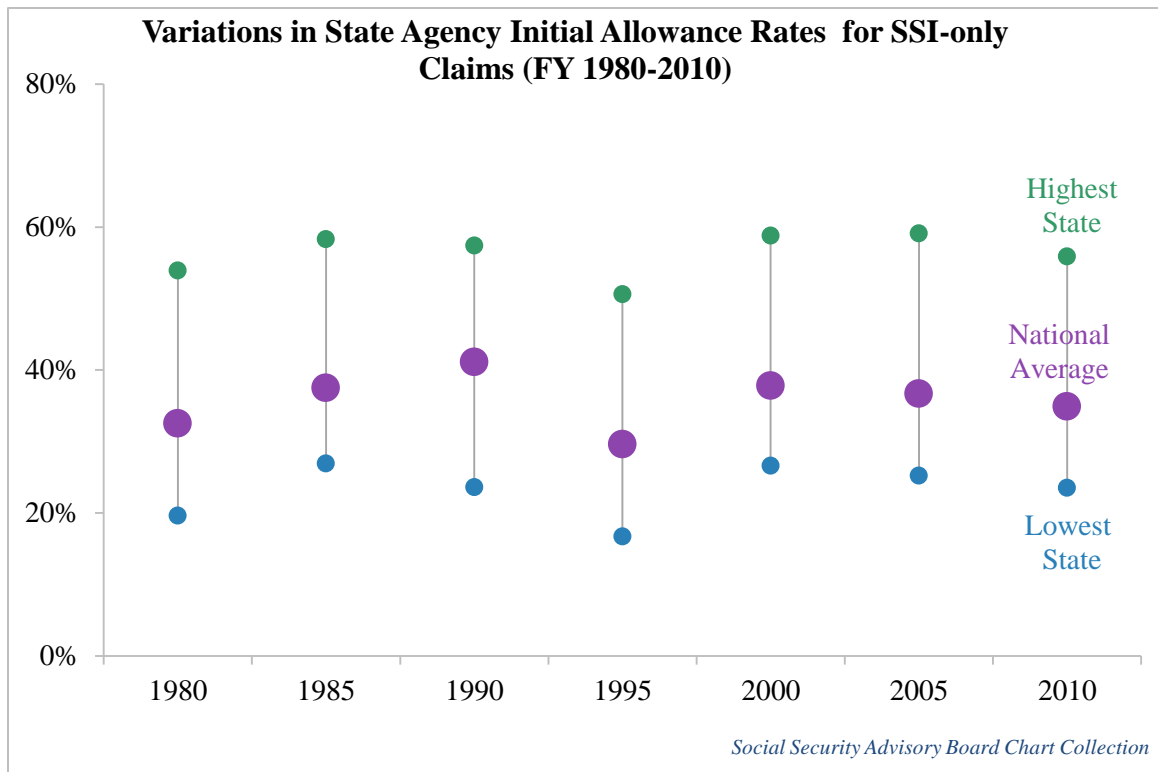


State agency allowance and denial rates vary widely from State to State. For example, in 2010 the percentage of cases decided favorably for DI-only applicants ranged from a high of 59 percent in New Jersey to a low of 34 percent in Tennessee. For SSI-only disability claims in 2010, allowance rates ranged from 56 percent in Alaska to 24 percent in Mississippi. For concurrent DI-SSI claims, allowance rates ranged from 40 percent in New Hampshire to 16 percent in West Virginia. The variation in allowance rates may reflect different characteristics of claimants or in the nature of industry in a particular area (e.g. mining, manufacturing, farming, etc.).

Sources:

U.S. Social Security Administration, Office of Disability Programs, Performance Management Report, data received August 2011.

Chart 1b: Variation in DDS Initial Allowance Rates: SSI-only Claims

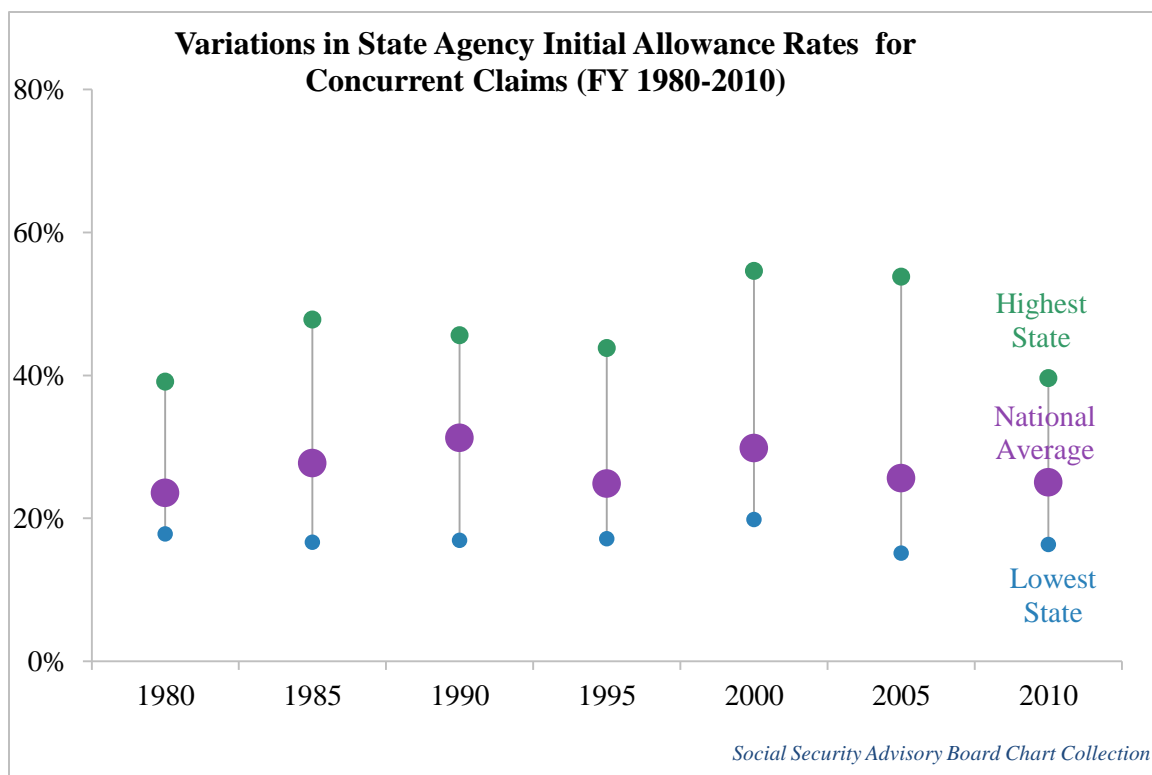


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Sources:

U.S. Social Security Administration, Office of Disability Programs, Performance Management Report, data received August 2011.

Chart 1c: Variation in DDS Initial Allowance Rates: Concurrent Claims

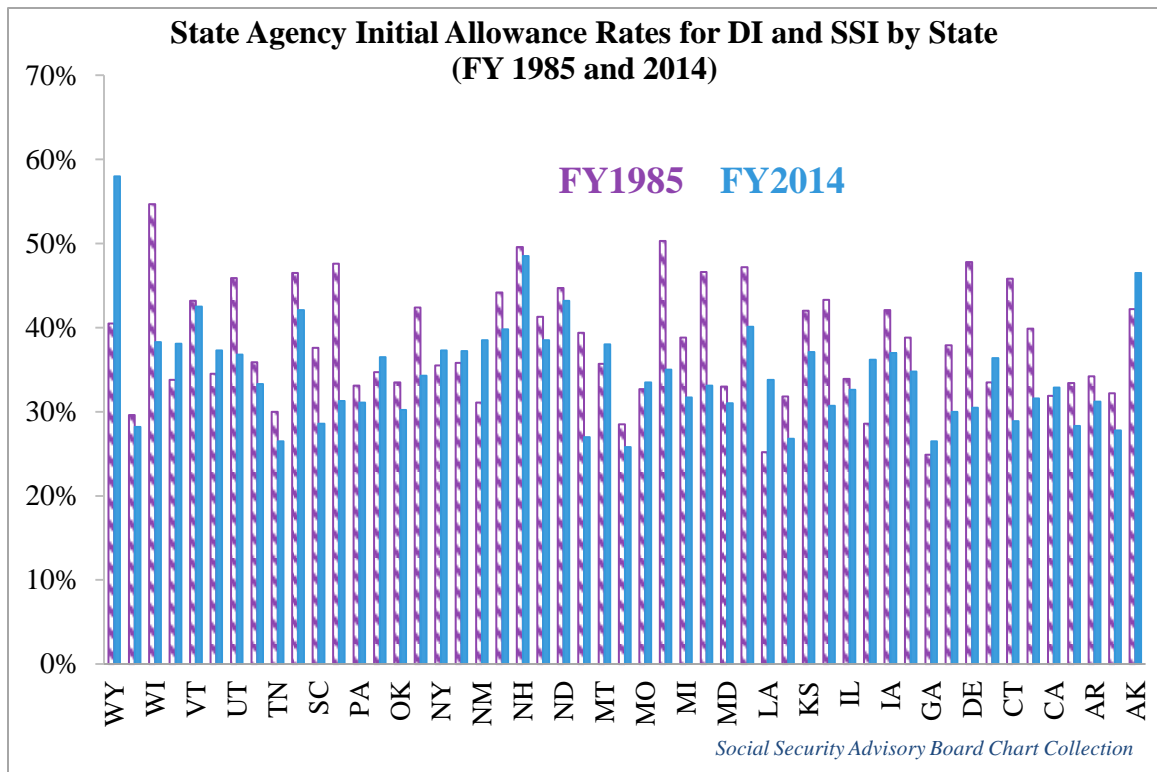


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Sources:

U.S. Social Security Administration, Office of Disability Programs, Performance Management Report, data received August 2011.

Chart 2: Initial Allowance Rates for DI and SSI by State

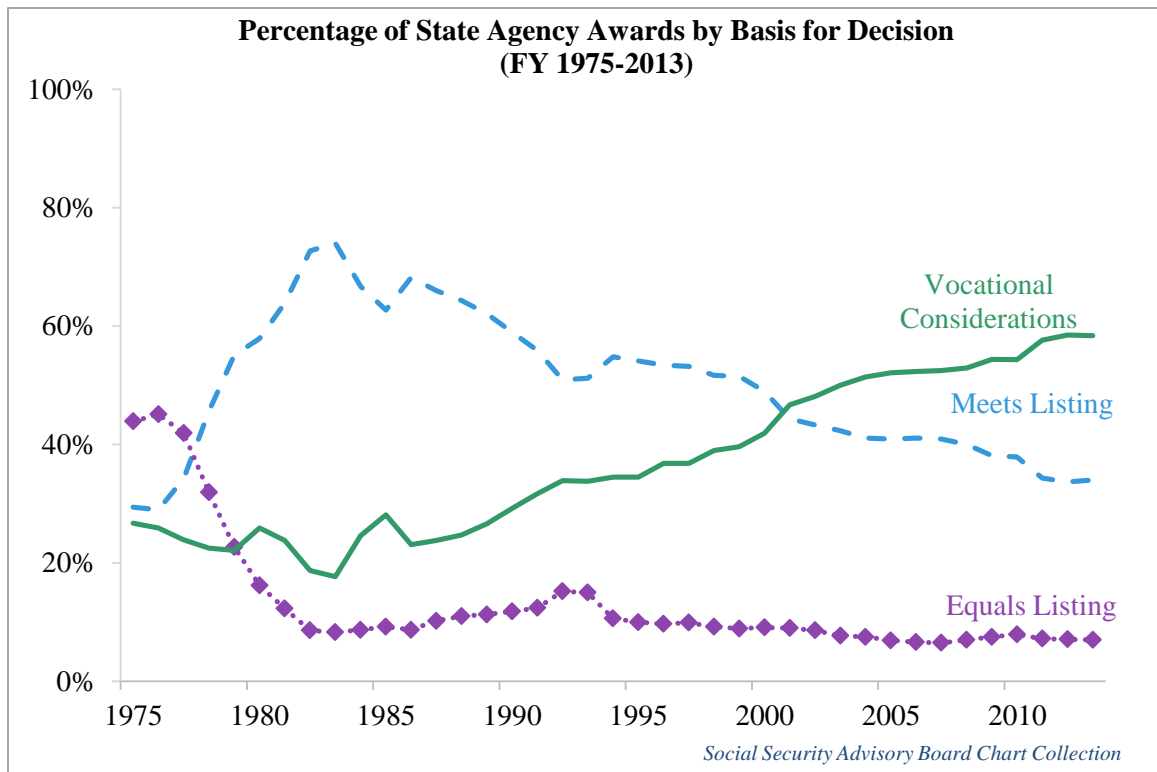


State agency initial allowance rates have also varied over time. For example, Wyoming's allowance rate increased by 17.5 percentage points between 1985 and 2014, while Wisconsin's decreased by 16.4 percentage points.

Sources:

U.S. Social Security Administration, Disability Determination Services (DDS) Performance Management Report, FY 2014.

Chart 3: State Agency Awards by Basis for Decision



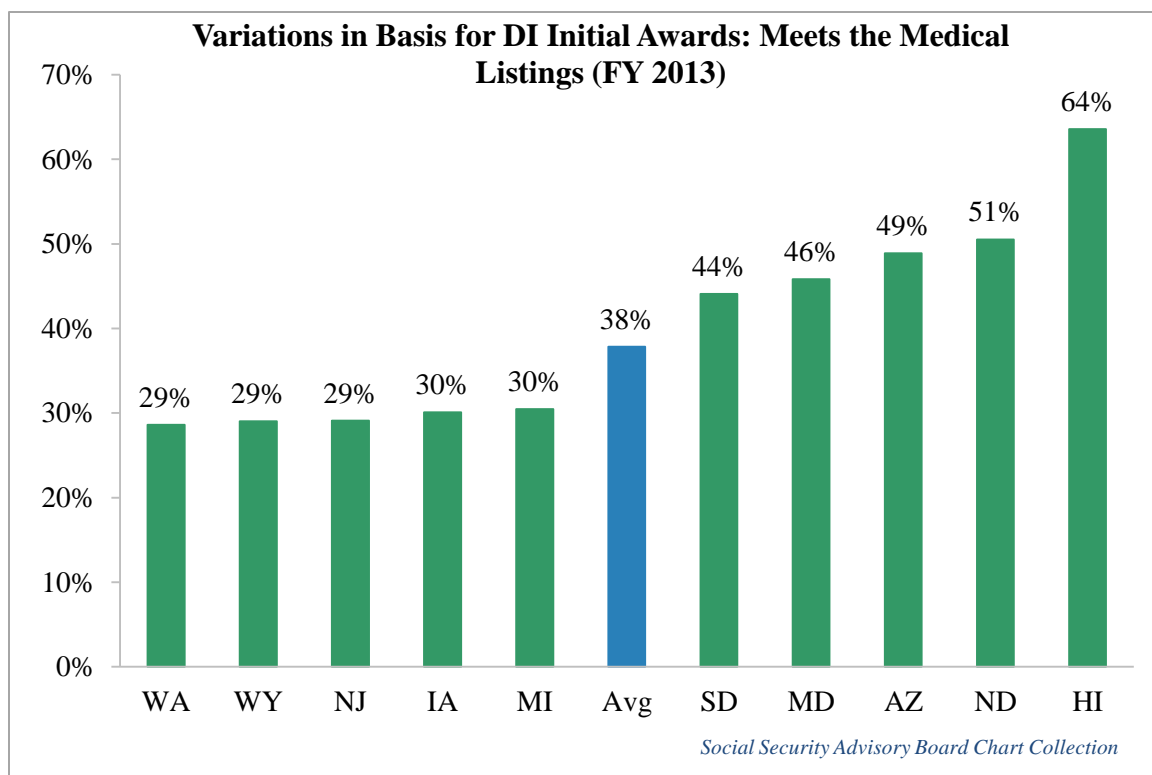
Since 1983, the percentage of initial level DI cases awarded on the basis of meeting the medical listings has declined from 74 percent to 34 percent, while the percentage of cases awarded on the basis of equaling the listings has remained relatively flat. The percentage based on vocational (or functional) evaluation has more than tripled, rising from 18 percent of all initial DI awards in 1983 to 58 percent in 2013. This increase corresponds to an increase in the number of DI cases where musculoskeletal and mental impairments were alleged and vocational evaluations are more likely to be required for these cases. Further, there were many policy changes in the 1980s stemming from court cases and legislation that directly affected how decision-makers assessed functional capacity.

Sources:

U.S. Social Security Administration, Office of Disability Programs, data last received August 2015.

Note: Initial DDS determinations for DI only, SSI is not included. Percentages do not reflect effects of reconsideration, hearing, or higher appellate decisions.

Chart 4a: Variations in Basis for DI Initial Awards: Meets the Medical Listings

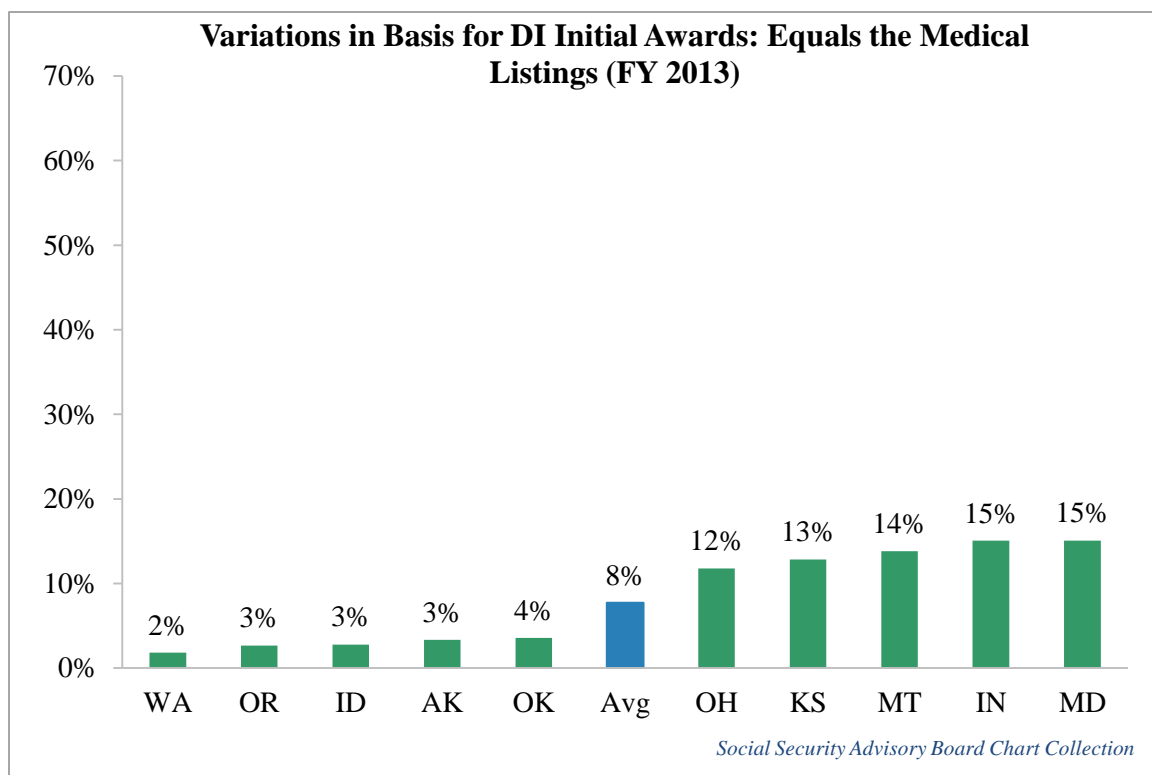


These charts show the variation among State agencies in the basis for awarding benefits. For example, in 2013, Hawaii made 64 percent of its initial DI awards on the basis that the claimant met the medical listings, while Washington State made only 29 percent of its awards on that basis. On the other hand, Washington State made 70 percent of its DI awards based on vocational factors, while Hawaii made only 28 percent of its awards on that basis.

Sources:

U.S. Social Security Administration, Office of Disability Programs, data last received August 2015.

Chart 4b: Variations in Basis for DI Initial Awards: Equals the Medical Listings

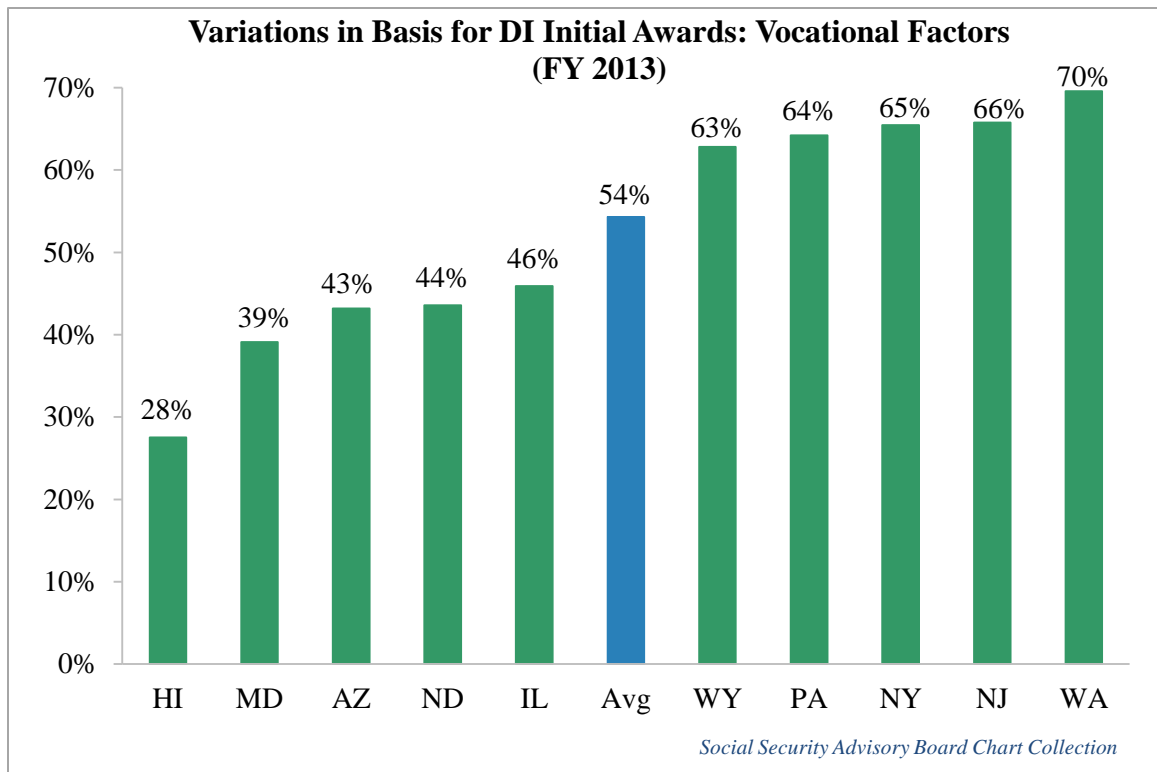


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Sources:

U.S. Social Security Administration, Office of Disability Programs, data last received August 2015.

Chart 4c: Variations in Basis for DI Initial Awards: Vocational Factors

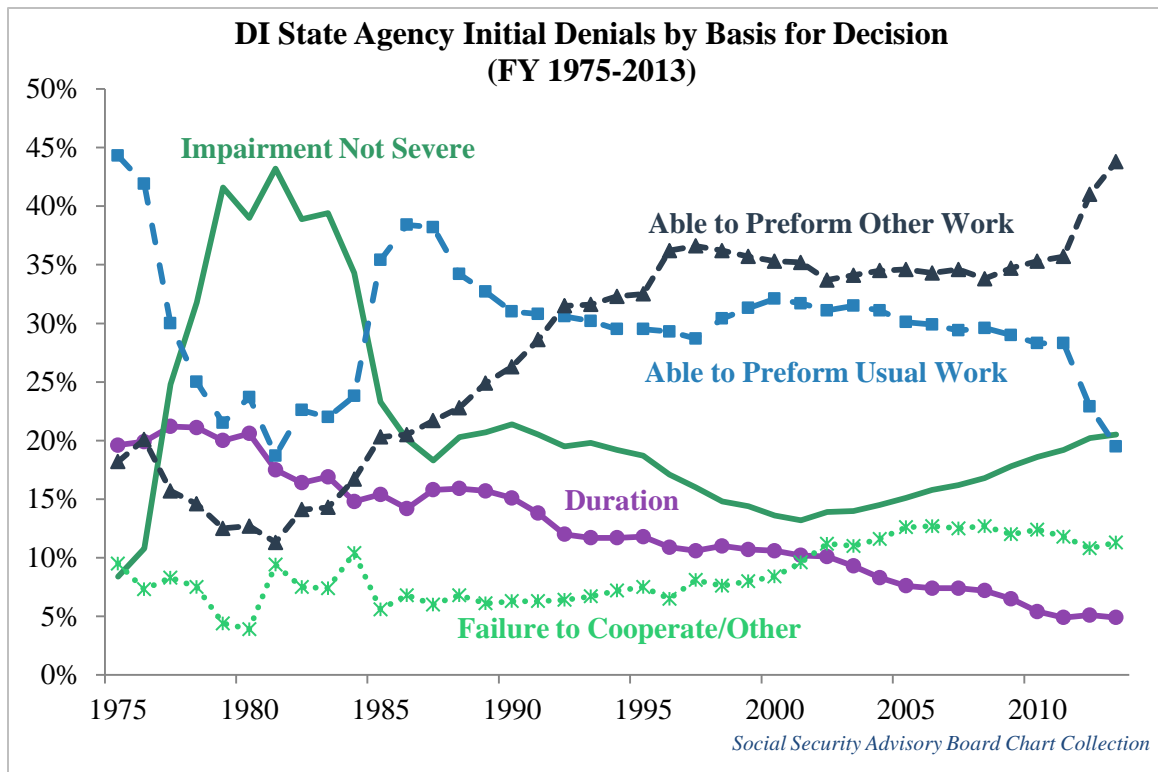


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Sources:

U.S. Social Security Administration, Office of Disability Programs, data last received August 2015.

Chart 5: DI State Agency Initial Denials by Basis for Decision



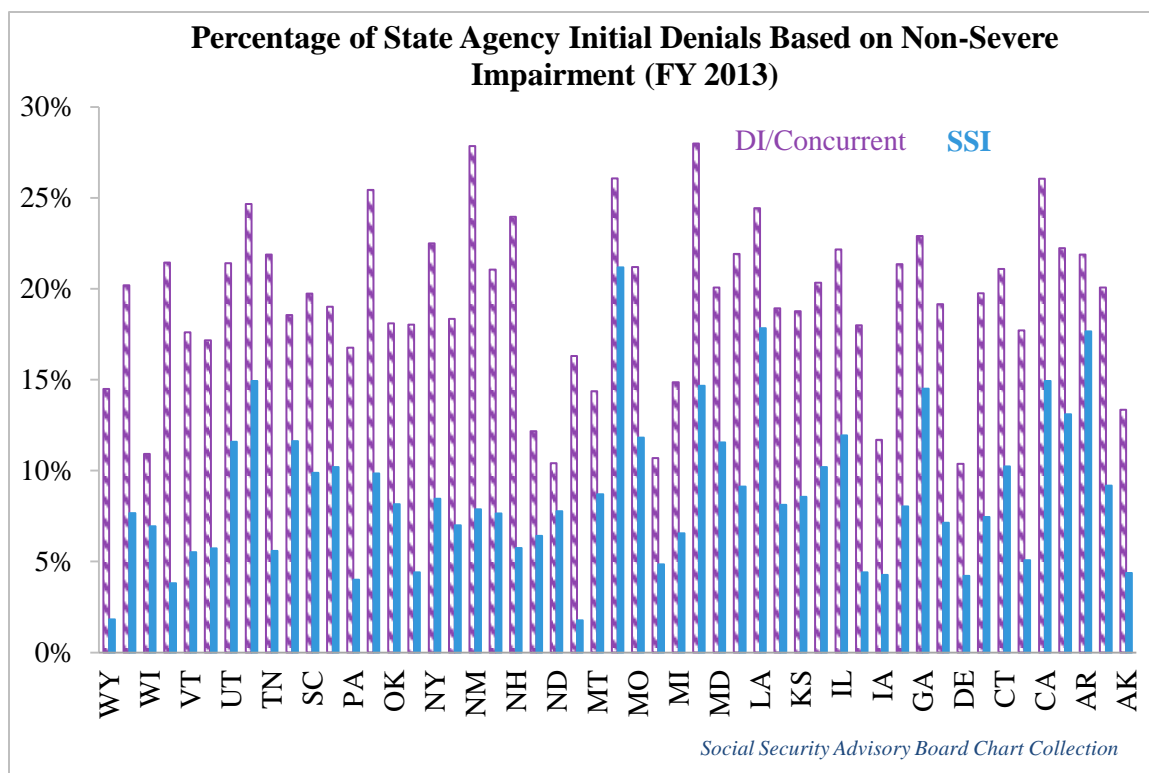
The reasons for denials by State agencies have varied widely over the years. Denials for non-severe impairments went from 8 percent of denials in 1975 to 43 percent in 1981 to 21 percent in 2013. Some of the decline in not severe determinations in the mid-1980s may have been the result of several circuit court cases that challenged how SSA was applying the standard.

Initial denials based on vocational factors showed significant variation until about 1995. Denials for ability to perform the claimant's usual work went from 44 percent of denials in 1975 to 19 percent in 1981 to 29 percent in 1995 and then leveled off at about 30 percent through 2011 before dropping to 23 percent in 2012 and to 20 percent in 2013. Denials for ability to perform other work – the most complex and judgmental denials – went from 18 percent in 1975 to 11 percent in 1981 to 33 percent in 1995 and then remained at around 35 percent through 2011 before going up to 41 percent in 2012 and to 44 percent in 2013.

Sources:

U.S. Social Security Administration, Office of Disability Programs, data last received November 2015.

Chart 6: State Agency Initial Denials Based on Non-Severe Impairment

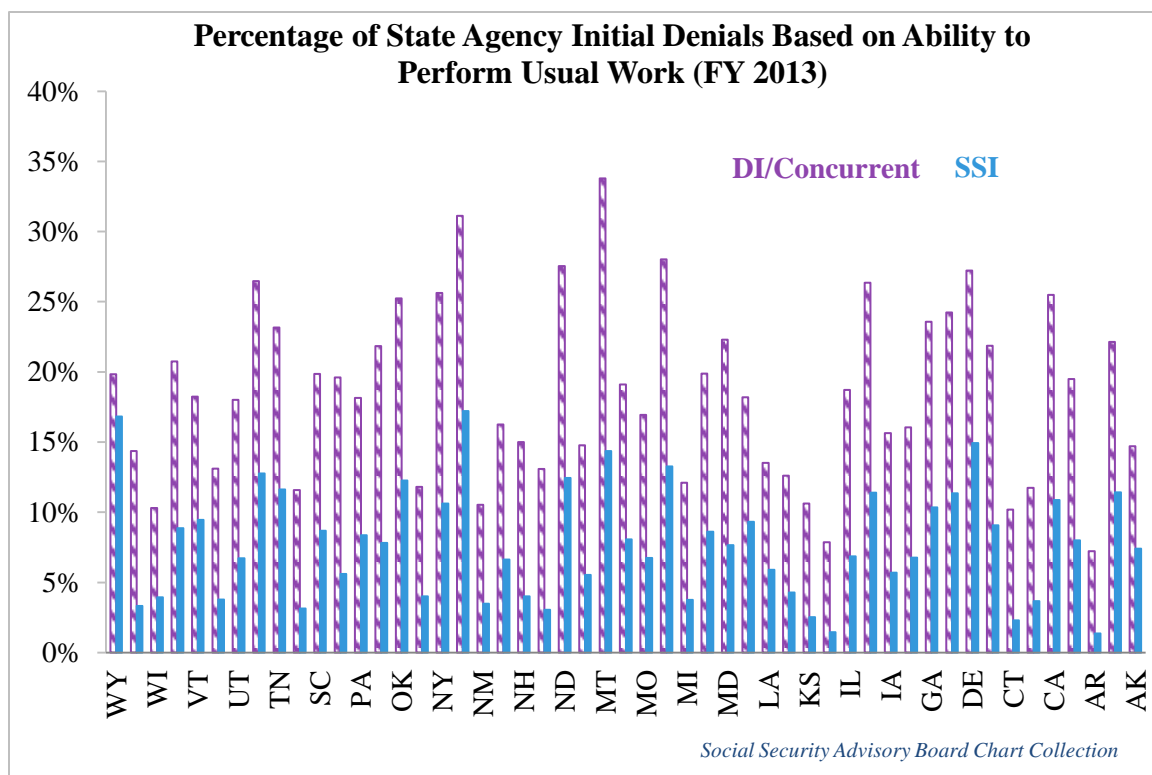


One of the early steps in the sequential evaluation of disability is the determination of whether an impairment is severe. For DI and concurrent DI-SSI applications, denials for this reason in 2013 ranged from 10 percent of all denials in Delaware to 28 percent in Maine. For SSI adult applications, denials for this reason ranged from 1.8 percent in North Carolina to 21 percent in Mississippi.

Sources:

U.S. Social Security Administration, Office of Disability Programs, data last received November 2015.

Chart 7: State Agency Initial Denials Based on Ability to Perform Usual Work

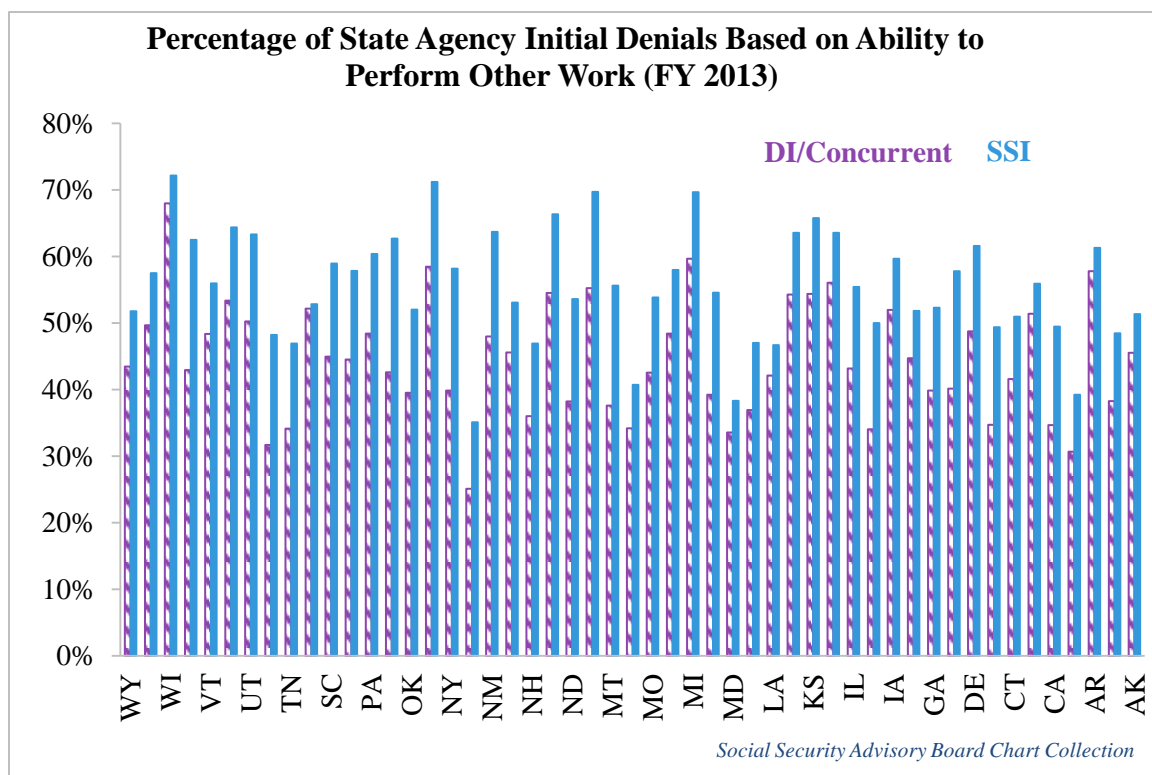


At a later step in the sequential evaluation of disability, the disability examiner determines whether the claimant can perform his or her usual work. For DI and concurrent applications, denials for this reason in 2013 ranged from 8 percent of all denials in Indiana to 34 percent in Montana. For SSI adult applications, denials for this reason ranged from 1.4 percent in Arkansas to 17 percent in Wyoming.

Sources:

U.S. Social Security Administration, Office of Disability Programs, data last received November 2015.

Chart 8: State Agency Initial Denials Based on Ability to Perform Other Work

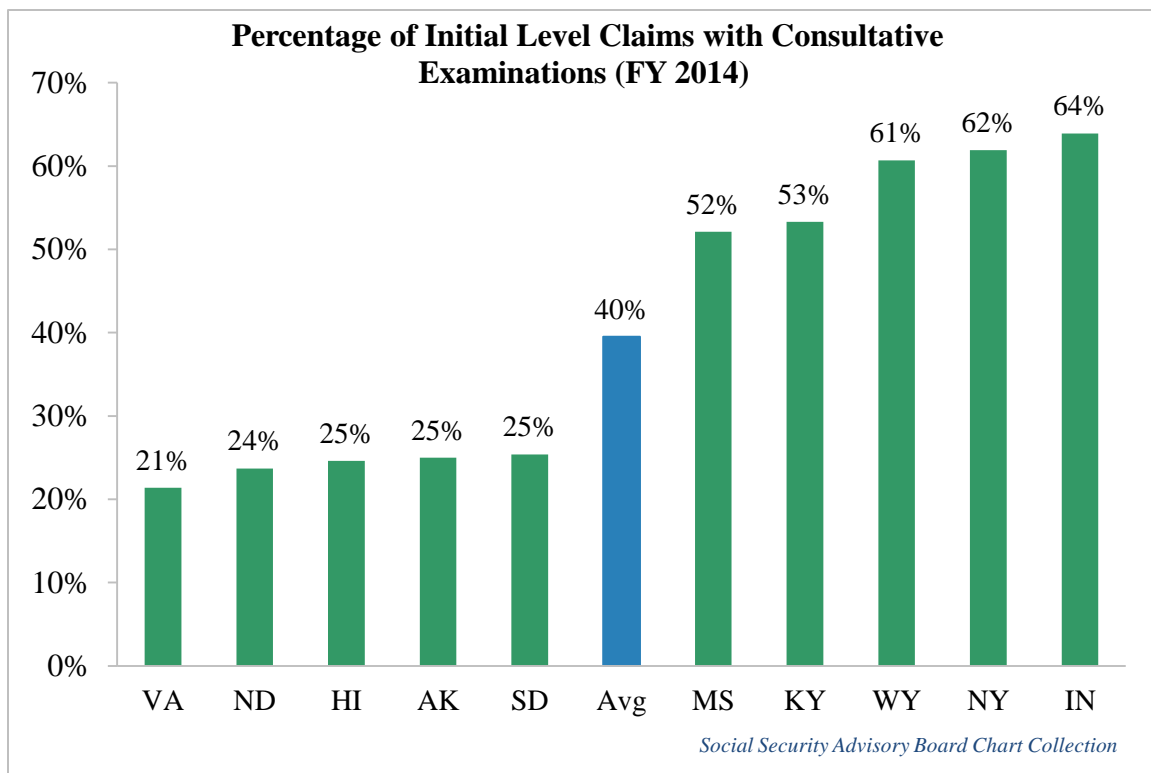


At the final step in the sequential evaluation, the disability examiner determines whether the claimant can do work other than his or her usual past work. For DI and concurrent applications, denials for this reason in fiscal year 2013 ranged from 25 percent of all denials in Nevada to 68 percent in Wisconsin. For SSI adult applications, denials for this reason ranged from 35 percent of all denials in Nevada to 72 percent in Wisconsin.

Sources:

U.S. Social Security Administration, Office of Disability Programs, data last received November 2015.

Chart 9: Initial Level Claims with Consultative Examinations



To supplement medical evidence of record or when such evidence is not available, DDSs purchase consultative examinations. In fiscal year 2014, the use of consultative examinations for initial SSDI and SSI disability decisions ranged from 21 percent in Virginia to 64 percent in Indiana. The national average was around 40 percent.

Sources:

U.S. Social Security Administration, Office of Disability Determinations, data last received July 2015.